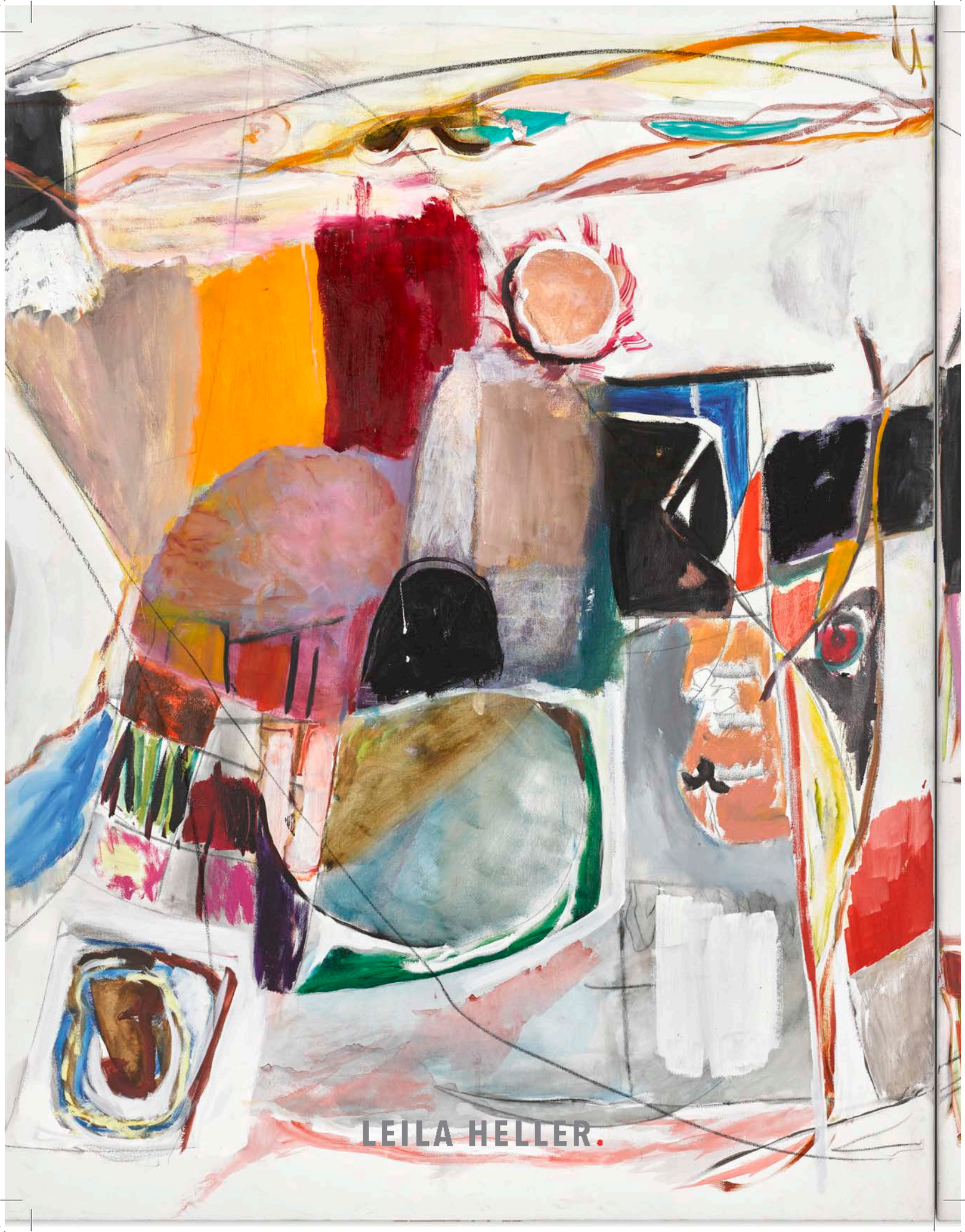
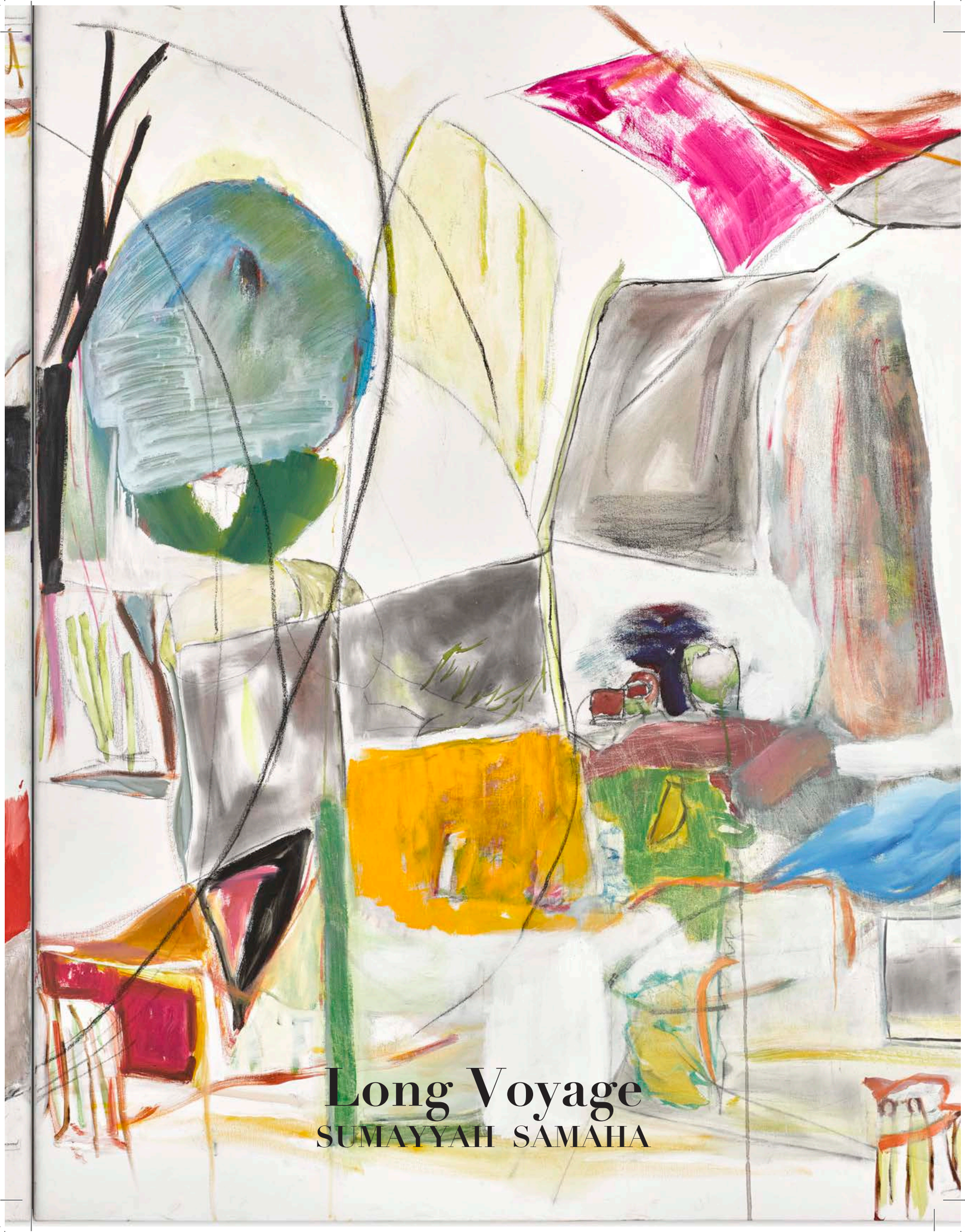

LEILA HELLER.



Long Voyage

SUMAYYAH SAMAHA

Published on the occasion of the exhibition of:
Sumayyah Samaha: Long Voyage
July 25, 2023 - August 31, 2023

Leila Heller Gallery is deeply grateful to Laura Doyle and Zayd Hammam for the kind introduction to Sumayyah Samaha.

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Catalogue Designed by Jordan Levine & Bahar Oromi
Images courtesy of the Artist, Sumayyah Samaha
Cover Image: Detail of *My 2nd Voyage*, 2020
Inside Back Cover Image: Detail of *My 3rd Voyage*, 2022

Long Voyage

SUMAYYAH SAMAHA

Long Voyage

Sumayyah Samaha

In recent paintings and works on paper, Sumayyah Samaha uses oil, charcoal, and watercolor to tell her visual story. With each image, her goal is always to find harmony between these different media and the varied abstract forms that emerge from her playful, gestural approach.

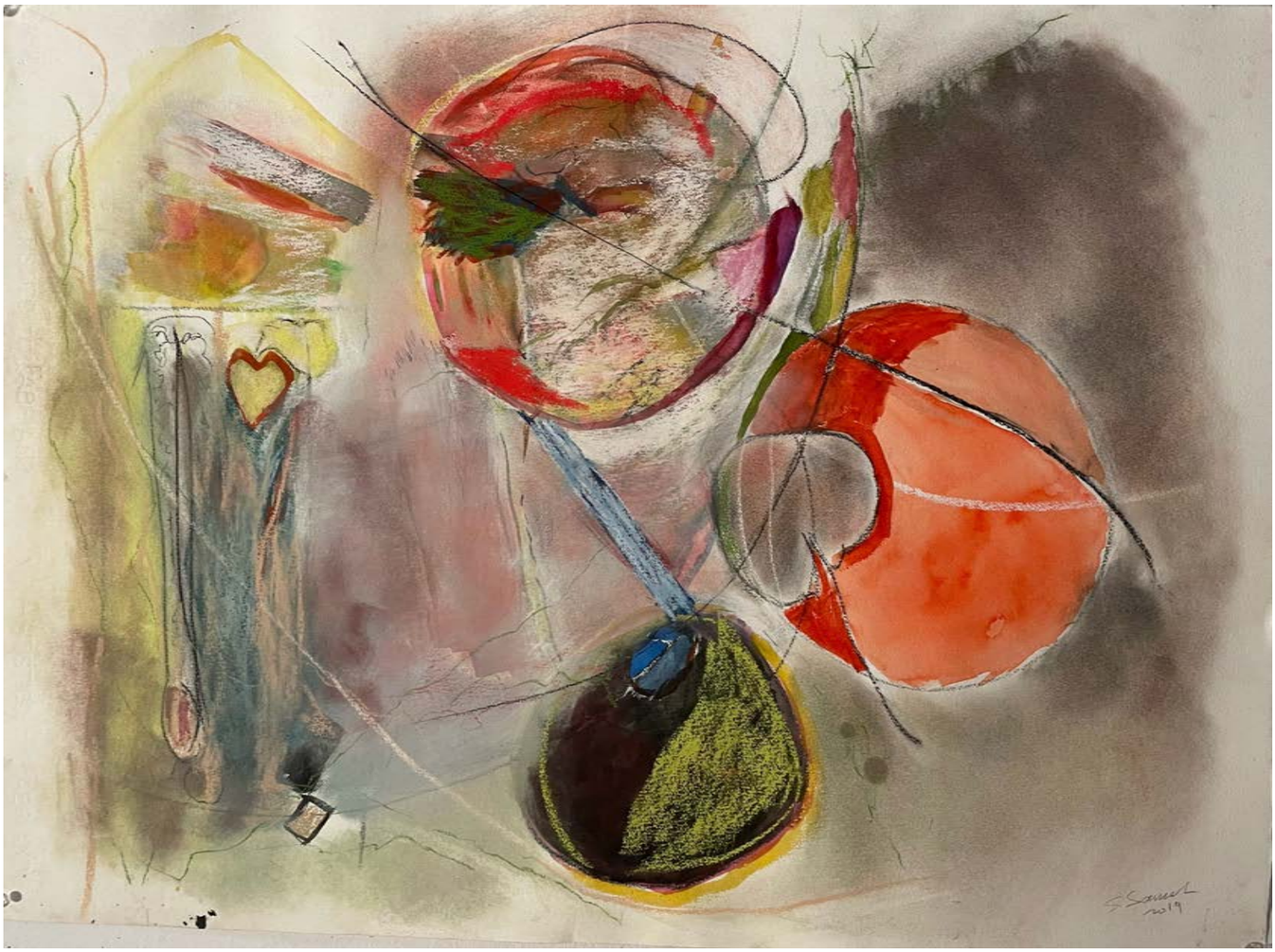
Larger works, like *My 3rd Voyage*, 2022, may hang in Samaha's live/work studio for months before it is complete. While sweeping, gestural lines in charcoal arc across canvases, Samaha paints, scrapes, erases and repaints the remaining surface with close attention as she develops an interplay between defined and undefined forms. Swaths of flat gradients are beside and behind free-form shapes, all floating upon a white background. Color, which abounds in Sahama's work, is determined by the type of light she seeks to realize.

Samaha moves back and forth freely across her surfaces, using a vocabulary informed by an artistic career spanning 40+ years and a range of mediums—oil painting, charcoal, watercolor, paper making, ceramics, sculpture, pastels, and installation. She describes this body of work as "free, stream of consciousness painting."

Constructed Imagination, 2023
Oil and Mixed Media on Paper
132.08 x 42.55 cm. / 52 x 16.75 in.

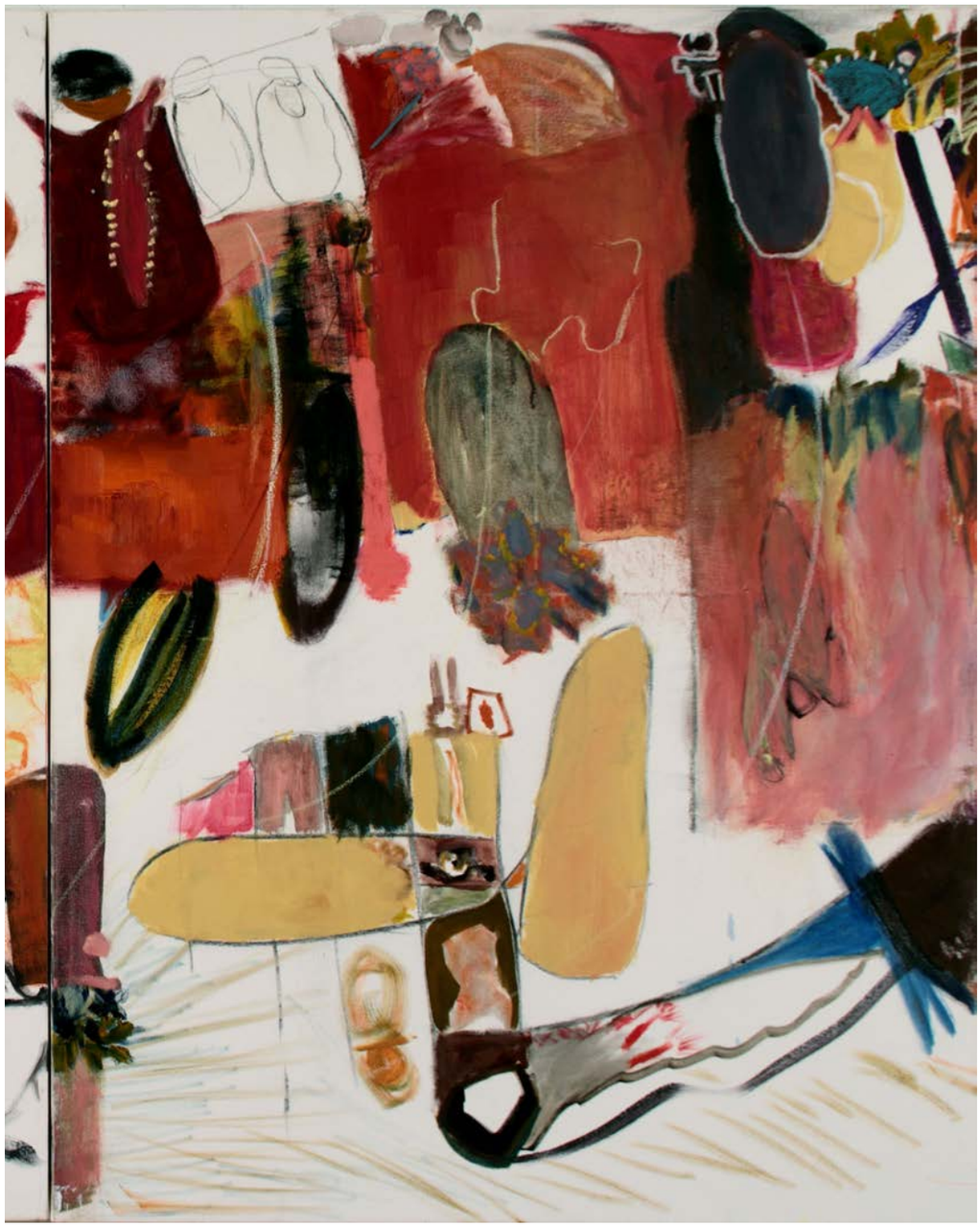
My 3rd Voyage, 2022
Oil and Mixed Media on Canvas
121.92 x 274.32 cm. / 48 x 108 in.

My 2nd Voyage, 2020
Oil and Mixed Media on Canvas
121.92 x 274.32 cm. / 48 x 108 in.



A Universe, 2019
Mixed Media on Paper
55.88 x 76.2 cm. / 22 x 30 in.

Lines and Forms XVII, 2017
Oil and Charcoal on Canvas
91.44 x 121.92 cm. / 36 x 48 in.

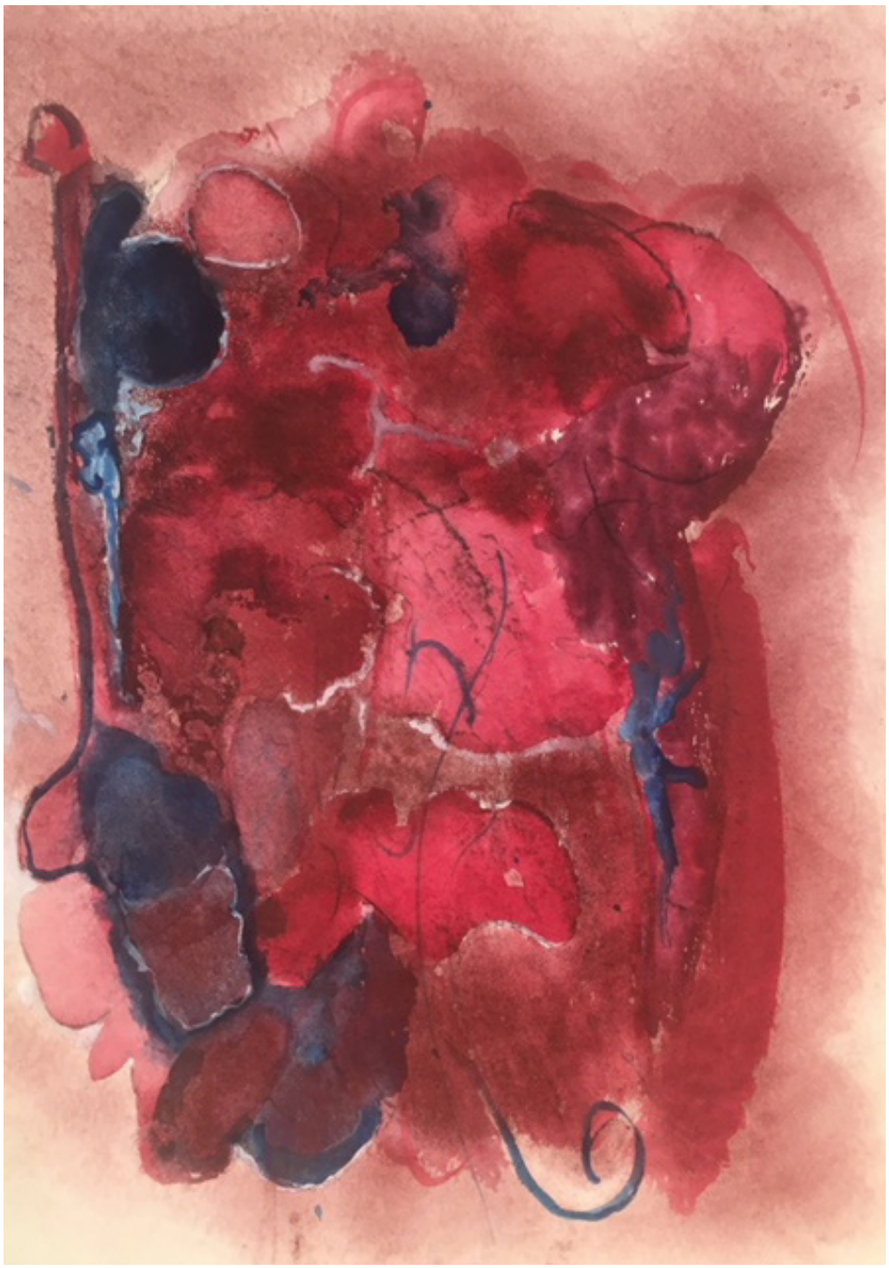


Anonymous Red, 2022
Oil and Mixed Media on Canvas
157.48 x 182.88 cm. / 62 x 72 in.

Lines and Forms XX, 2017
Oil and Charcoal on Canvas
91.44 x 121.92 cm. / 36 x 48 in.

Lines and Forms XXI, 2018
Oil and Charcoal on Canvas
91.44 x 121.92 cm. / 36 x 48 in.

The Ultimate, 2022
Oil and Mixed Media on Canvas
152.4 x 132.08 cm. / 60 x 52 in.



Untitled, 2010
Watercolor and Pastel
50.8 x 38.1 cm. / 20 x 15 in.

My World, 2019
Oil and Mixed Media on Canvas
91.44 x 243.84 cm. / 36 x 96 in.

SUMAYYAH SAMAHA

b.1939. Shweir, Lebanon

Sumayyah Samaha is a Lebanese painter and mixed media artist who has lived and exhibited work in New York since the early 1980's.

In addition to numerous solo exhibitions at 22 Wooster Gallery, Wilmer Jennings Gallery at Kenkeleba House, Denise Bibro Fine Art, and Skoto Gallery, Samaha also has an extensive group exhibition history at venues throughout the United States, Europe, and the Middle East. Highlights include *American Abstraction: A New Decade* at the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art, Loretto, PA; *New York Chronicles* at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts, Qatar VCUQ Gallery, Doha, Qatar (2010); *Art in Embassies*, US Embassy, Kuwait City, Kuwait (2008-09); *In/Visible: Contemporary Art by Arab American Artists* — the opening exhibition of the Arab American National Museum and Cultural Center in Dearborn, Michigan (2005); and *New York Collections 2002* at the Albright Knox Museum Gallery, Buffalo, NY (2002.)

Samaha's work can be found in public collections that include the Arab American National Museum and Cultural Center in Dearborn, Michigan; Centrum Sztuki in Warsaw, Poland; Kenkeleba House in New York, NY; Pfizer Pharmaceutical in New York, NY; and Bank Audi in Beirut, Lebanon.
Publications include At the Edge of the City: Reinhabiting Public Space Toward the Recovery of Beirut's Horsh Al-Sanawar, edited by Fadi Shayya; Encyclopedia of Arab American Artists by Fayeq Oweis; and The Women Artists in Lebanon, by Helen Khal, prepared for the Institute of Women's Studies in the Arab World.

Samaha was a Co-Founder of 22 Wooster Gallery in New York (1978-1988), has participated in panels, including Turning Writing into Art: Artists Talk on Art at New York University's Department of Middle Eastern Studies, and was a juror of painting for the New York Foundation of the Art's 1998 grant season. Awards include grants from the Pollock Krasner Foundation (2016) and the Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation (2015). Samaha is a two time resident at the Emily Harvey Foundation Residency in Venice, Italy.

EDUCATION

B.A., American University of Beirut
M.A., University of Pittsburgh, 1965

AWARDS & GRANTS

2016 Pollock Krasner Individual Grant
2015 Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation Grant
2010 Emily Harvey Foundation Residency Venice, Italy

SOLO SHOWS

2023 *Long Voyage*, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, NY
2023 *Over the Sofa*, Carter Burden Gallery, New York, NY
2023 *Friends and Family Show*, Carter Burden Gallery, New York, NY
2019 *Sumayyah Samaha: Lines, Forms, Substance*, Carter Burden Gallery, New York, NY
2017 *On the Wall*, Carter Burden Gallery, New York, NY
2017 *Artscoops.com*, Featured Artist Online Exhibition
2010 *Aesthetics: Art & Politics*, Art Circle Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon
2008 *Darkness Ushers Dawn*, Skoto Gallery, New York, NY
2007 *Love, Life, and Pain*, Wilmer Jennings Gallery at Kenkeleba House, New York, NY
2004 *Personal Landscapes*, Blink Gallery, Andes, NY
2002 *Strange Fruit*, Denise Bibro Fine Art, New York, NY
2000 *Recent Paintings*, Denise Bibro Fine Art, New York, NY
1999 *Beyond the Brush*, Denise Bibro Fine Art, New York, NY
1998 *Paintings*, Farleigh Dickinson University, Hackensack, NJ
1997 *Recent Paintings & Pastels*, Denise Bibro Fine Art, New York, NY
1995 *Works in Process*, Denise Bibro Fine Art, New York, NY
1994 *Landscapes: Where My Soul Roams*, Denise Bibro Fine Art, New York, NY
1993 *Sumayyah Samaha*, Kenkeleba Gallery, New York, NY
1982 *NYC 1981*, 22 Wooster Gallery, 22 Wooster Gallery, New York, NY
1981 *Sumayyah Samaha*, 22 Wooster Gallery, New York, NY

MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS

2023 *Osama Abusitta Collection*, Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman, Jordan
2005 *In / Visible - Contemporary Art by Arab American Artists*, The Arab American National Museum, Dearborn, Michigan
1994 *American Abstraction: A New Decade*, Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art, Loretto, PA

SELECTED GROUP SHOWS

2022 *CITYArts SoHo Artist History Walk*, CITYArts, New York, NY
2020 *Salon Zurcher: Eleven Spirited Women*, Zurcher Fine Arts, New York, NY
2019 *Auction*, Artscoops.com, Beirut, Lebanon
2019 *Abstract Vision*, El Barrio's Artspace PS109, New York, NY
2016 *Group Show*, Carter Burden Gallery, New York, NY
2015 *Figuring Abstraction*, Westbeth Gallery, New York, NY
2013 *The Emo Show*, The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, New York, NY
2012 *25 Years Anniversary Show Part 2*, ArtWiki: Digital Venue of the 7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, Berlin Biennale, Curated by Kazuko Miyamoto
2012 *Group Show*, Gallery onetwentyeight, New York, NY
2012 *Exhibition of Drawings*, Skoto Gallery, New York, NY
2011 *Towering*, Skoto Gallery & Curate NYC, Curated by Hoong Yee Lee Krakauer, Executive Director of Queens Council on the Arts, New York, NY
2011 *Summer Show*, Skoto Gallery, New York, NY
2010 *New York Chronicles*, Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar: VCUQ Gallery, Doha, Qatar
2009 *Group Exhibition*, Skoto Gallery, New York, NY
2009 *Small Works; 30 seconds,* Washington Square Gallery, New York, NY
2008 *Art in Embassies*, US Embassy, Kuwait City, Kuwait.
2007 *Three Person Show*, Blink Gallery, Andes, NY
2006 *3 Arab Painters in New York: Samia Halaby, Sumayyah Samaha, Athir Shayota*, Curated by Maymanah Farhat, The Bridge Gallery, New York, NY
2006 *3 Person Show*, Blink Gallery, Andes, NY
2005 *Real Compared to What; Artistic Expression as a wrench in the system -- not a cog in the wheel*, Gallery onetwentyeight, New York, NY
2005 *Pieces 6*, Gallery onetwentyeight, New York, NY
2004 *YW [Why War, Why Dubya?],* Viridian Gallery, New York, NY
2003 *New York Collection 2002,* Albert Knox Museum Gallery, Buffalo, NY
2003 *WAR ART,* Judson Memorial Church, New York, NY
2003 *DEFIANCE*, Udi Aloni Project Room, New York, NY
2002 *New York Collection 2002,* Albert Knox Museum Gallery, Buffalo, NY
2001 *Ceramic and Oils, Three-Person Show*, Gallery onetwentyeight, New York, NY
2000 *Local Papers,* Williamsburg Art and Historical Center, Brooklyn, NY
2000 *Generations II: Survey of Women Artists at the Millennium*, A.I.R. Gallery, New York, NY
2000 *Invitational Exhibition,* Gallery onetwentyeight, New York, NY
1999 *Art In Embassies,* American Embassy International Exhibitions, Beirut, Lebanon
1999 *New York Abstractions*, Albright Knox Museum Gallery, Buffalo, NY
1999 *Group Invitational*, Denise Bibro Fine Art, New York, NY
1995 *Group Exhibition*, Gallery onetwentyeight, New York, NY

1992 *Abstraction I*, Denise Bibro Fine Art, New York, NY
1992 *Juxtapositions, Four Artists,* Curated by Virginia Cuppaidge, SoHo Art Space, New York, NY
1992 *Spare Parts, Collages from the 19 Painters and Printmakers*, Curated by Peggy Hadden, Marine Midland Bank, New York, NY
1991 *Three Painters,* Platform Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon
1990 *Shapeshifters,* Borough of Manhattan Community College, Triplex Gallery, New York, NY
1990 *Two Person Exhibition*, International Monetary Fund, Washington, D.C
1989 *Traveling Exhibition*, The Studio American Collection, Poland
1989 *Cityscapes: Window Installation*, 480 Broome Street, New York, NY, Funded by Con Edison and New York Community for Artists
1988 *Contemporary Lebanese Artists*, Kufa Gallery, London, England
1986 *Contemporary Arab Art in the US,* US-Arab Chamber of Commerce, New York, NY
1986 *Chenal Group*, Galerie Pablo Picasso, Denain, France
1985 *Two Person Exhibition*, 22 Wooster Gallery, New York, NY
1985 *Artists at Northside*, Northside Arts Industries, Brooklyn, NY
1985 *Chenal Group*, Espace Vendome, Paris, France
1985 *Two Person Exhibition*, Peri-Renneth Gallery, Westhampton Beach, NY

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

American Collection, Centrum Sztuki, Warsaw, Poland
Arab American National Museum, Dearborn, MI
Bank Audi, Beirut, Lebanon
Chemical Bank, New York, NY
Kenkeleba House, New York, NY
New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation, New York, NY
Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman, Jordan
Pfizer Pharmaceutical, New York, NY
Prudential Insurance

PUBLICATIONS

At the Edge of the City: Reinhabiting Public Space Toward the Recovery of Beirut's Horsh Al-Sanawbar
Fadi Shayya (Editor), George Arbid (Foreword), Danny Khoury (Designer); First edition in 2010, Published by DISCURSIVE FORMATIONS. Beirut's park and public space, an effort towards understanding contextual meanings and practices of public life and public space in the Mediterranean context of Beirut. Features "Pine trees don't make pine nuts," 2006

Oweis, Fayeq; *Encyclopedia of Arab American Artists*; Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 2008

Khal, Helen; *The Women Artists in Lebanon*; Prepared for the Institute of Women's Studies in the Arab World

"A Gathering of the Tribes" Volume 4, No. 1, 1995 Black & White Photo, page 21

"IBM Nachrichten 45," HEFT 323, 1995, color photos of ceramic/mixed media work, page 54-55, 57-58, 61

REVIEWS

"Beyond Good & Evil," *NOW Lebanon*, Hannah Jewel, June 11, 2010

al Akhbar newspaper, Z. Ghanem, June 18, 2010

"Fait la guerre à la guerre," *Femme Magazine*, Frida Debanné, June 2010

"L'art engagé (et enragé)," *L'Orient le Jour* - Maya Ghandoor Hert, June 5, 2010

"Three Arab Painters in New York," *Palestine Chronicle*, Remi Kanazi, 2006

"In/Visible," *Nafas Art Magazine*, 2005

"In/Visible," *Bidoun; Art and Culture from the Middle East*, Kate McClellan, Fall 2005

"Sumayyah Samaha Explores Issues of War and Occupation," Maymanah Farhat, *ArteEast*, June 5, 2005

"Le Fruit Défendus," *L'Orient Le Jour*, Sylviane Zehil, October 2, 2002, Beirut, Lebanon

"Sumayyah Samaha: The Form of Passion," Catalog essay by Garrit Henry for 1997 Exhibition, New York, NY

"Fecondité d'Invention pour un Trio Seducteur," *L'Oreint Le Jour*, May Makarem, August 2, 1991, Beirut, Lebanon

"Sumayyah Samaha," *Sayyidati*, (*Elle Magazine*, Arabic Edition), Thérèse Basbous, Spring 1992, Paris, France

"Samaha, Rameh, Demeulnaere," Al Nahar, August 9, 1991, Beirut, Lebanon

ArtSpeak, November 1982, New York, NY

AARG (Association of Artist Run Galleries), December 1982, New York, NY

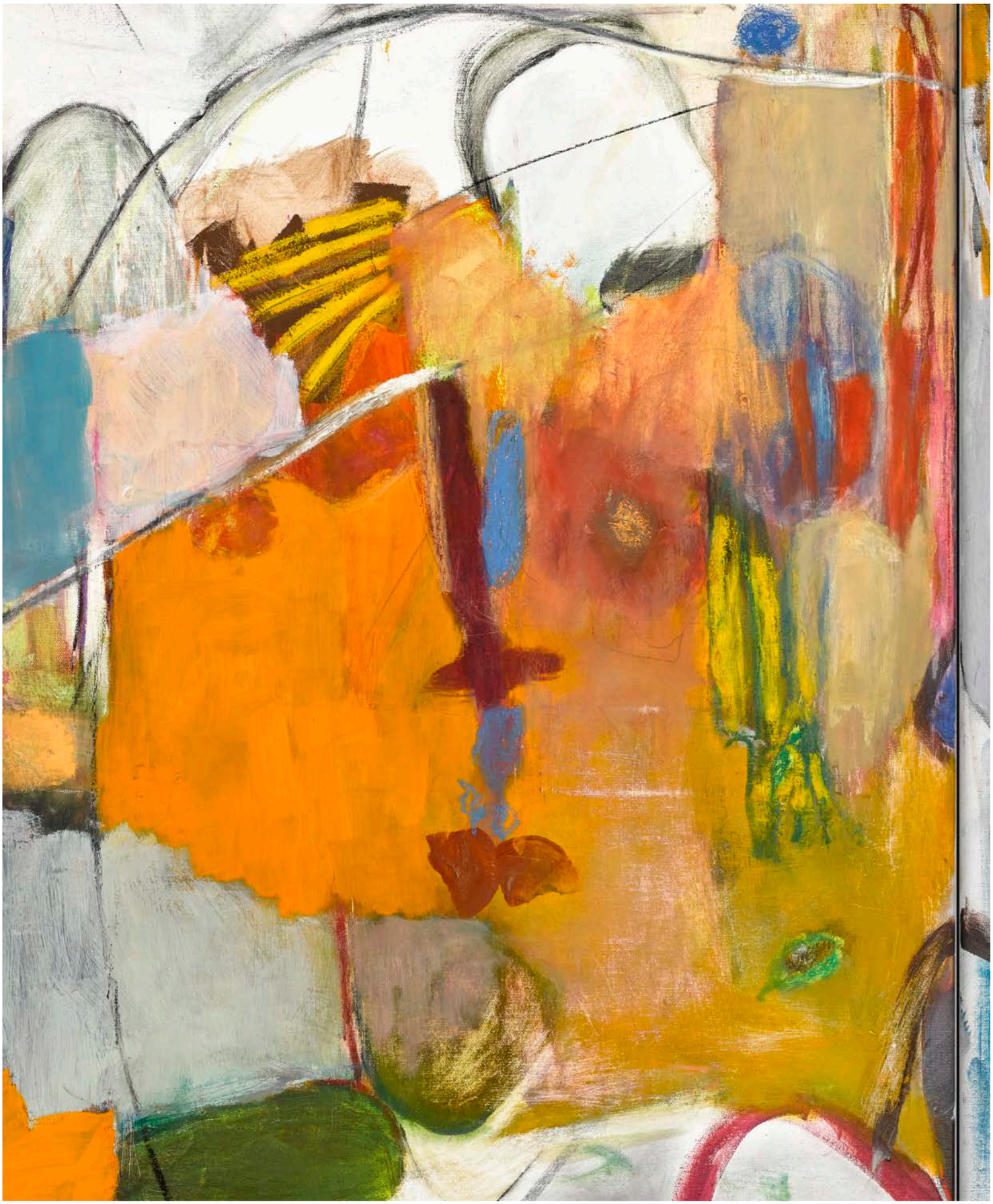
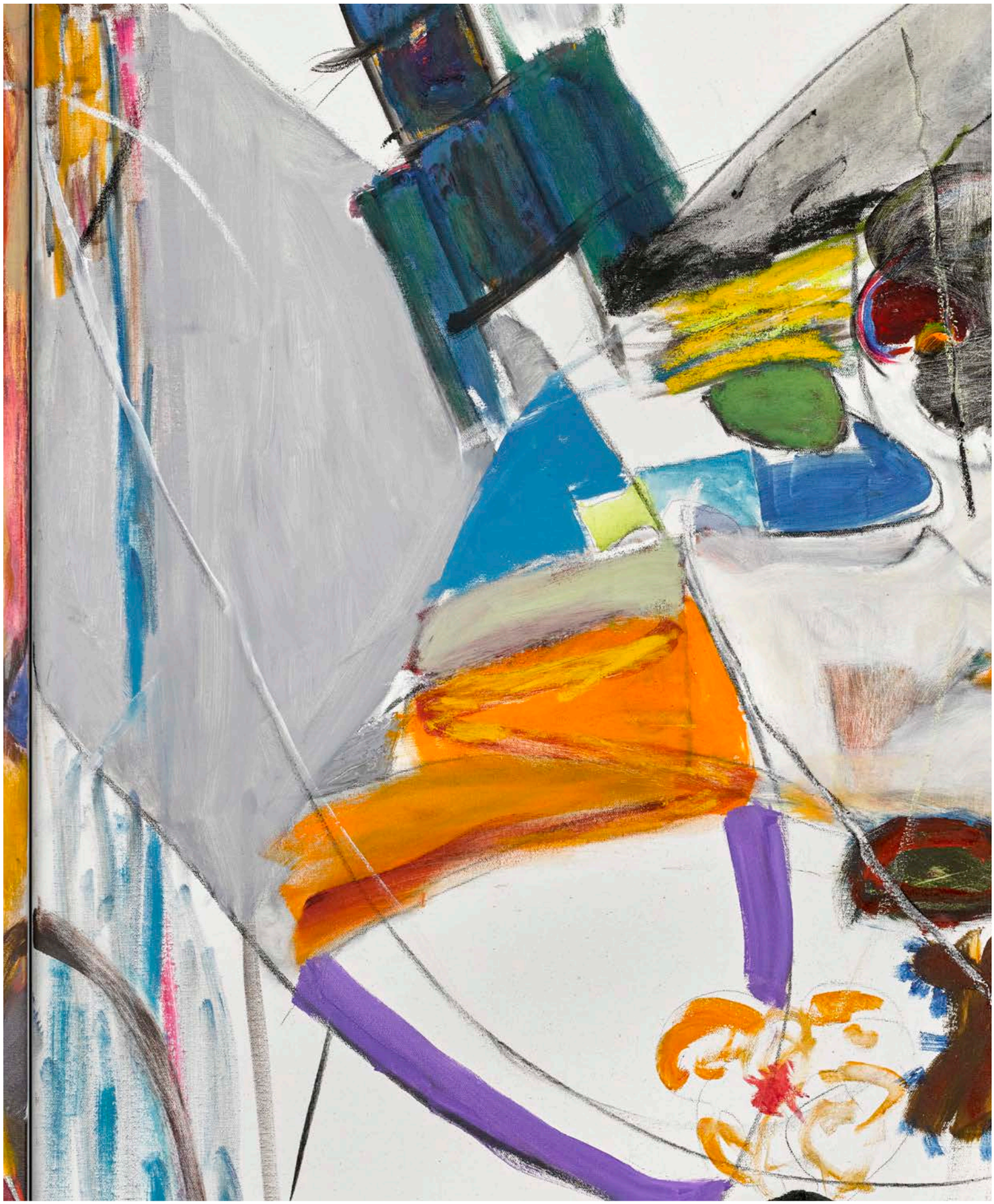
ArtSpeak, February 1981, New York, NY

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

Co-founded and was an active member of 22 Wooster Gallery, 1978-1988

The Network of Arab American Professionals (NAAP) November 17, 2007, New York

Panelist, "Turning Writing into Art: Artists Talk on Art" at the New York University Department of Middle Eastern Studies, March 20, 2009

Panelist, "With Each Stroke: The Role of Art in Activism and Social Change," Fourth Annual NAAP National Conference

Juror, Painting Award, New York Foundation for the Arts, 1998